The Anchorage School District (ASD) serves an urban population and enrolls 48,600 students in Grades PK-12. The student population is ethnically and culturally diverse, with 120 different languages spoken in students’ homes. The district operates 60 elementary schools, 9 middle schools and 6 high schools as well as several alternative and specialized programs and schools.

One particular challenge faced by educators in the Anchorage School District is a high transiency rate due to the structure of the local economy. Approximately 33% of the elementary students enrolled in ASD schools qualify for the federally funded free or reduced-price lunch program, although on a school-by-school basis the rate can be as high as 96%.

The Anchorage School District Mathematics Benchmark

% Advanced & Proficient — Grade 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>ASD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
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<td>60</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although math is frequently viewed as a gatekeeper, when children understand the concepts behind the operations and relationships of numbers and have good problem solving strategies, those gates are open allowing students to go as far as they choose.”

Sandy Schoff,
Math Curriculum Coordinator

One of 6 large urban districts nationwide which posted math and reading scores that met or exceeded statewide averages in all grades tested. The comparison to the state total is noteworthy because approximately 40% of all students in Alaska are educated in the Anchorage School District, and thus the ASD is very much being compared to itself when looking at the state totals.

The mission of the Anchorage School District is to educate all students for success in life. For elementary mathematics educators in the district, this calls for all students to develop a meaningful understanding of mathematics. These educators believe that a meaningful understanding of
moved forward with pilots of Everyday Mathematics in five schools beginning in fall 1996. At the end of the school year, the pilot teachers reported very positive experiences with the program and their schools adopted Everyday Mathematics. The following year, an additional twelve Anchorage schools implemented Everyday Mathematics in Grades K-6. Over the next two years, another 33 Anchorage elementary schools adopted Everyday Mathematics.

Support for Teachers

“Good training and support for teachers are part of the formula for a successful implementation of Everyday Mathematics,” comments Sandy Schoff, math curriculum coordinator in the district. With funding available from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the Anchorage School District created 4 positions for Teacher Experts in mathematics.

One initiative undertaken by the Teacher Experts is delivering staff development training on Everyday Mathematics to all ASD teachers in the intermediate grades. In the 2003–2004 school year, teachers in Grades 4 and 5 received this training, and training for Grade 6 teachers will occur in the 2004–2005 school year. The main focus of these sessions is to assist classroom teachers with the mathematical content presented in Everyday Mathematics as well as with how to manage an Everyday Mathematics classroom.

The Teacher Experts also worked to align the secure goals in Everyday Mathematics Grades 1–6 with the district’s standards in mathematics. Pacing guides were created at each grade level, laying out week by week where teachers should be in the program in order to complete all of the lessons. The pacing guides show teachers how to regularly include extra practice, games and assessment rubrics in the classroom. Because of these pacing guides, many teachers feel more confident teaching Everyday Mathematics.

Results

In 1997 and 1998, the Alaska State Legislature enacted laws that require the assessment of Alaska students to ensure the accountability of Alaska’s public schools. The state’s department of education established an assessment system that consists of Benchmark Examinations in reading, writing and mathematics. Elementary school students have been taking the Benchmark Evaluations in Grades 3 and 6 since 2000.

On the Mathematics Benchmark Evaluations, many students in the Anchorage School District are performing in the Advanced and Proficient ranges according to the state standards. In 2003, 75% of Grade 3 students in Anchorage achieved scores in the Advanced and Proficient ranges of the Benchmark examination. At Grade 6, 68% of Anchorage students were performing at the Advanced and Proficient levels. Many of these students become the 7th and 8th grade students who complete algebra before entering high school.

“As educators, we understand that focus makes a difference in teaching, and this is especially true when teaching Everyday Mathematics,” offers Schoff. “Our goal in the Anchorage Math Curriculum Department is to give teachers the tools and training to make Everyday Mathematics effective in their classrooms.”

For additional information on the Everyday Mathematics program, please contact us toll-free at 1-888-772-4543 and visit our Web site at www.WrightGroup.com.

Meeting All Expectations